

Even had this difficulty not existed, the social organization 231 of the American nomads made the keeping of domesticated animals well nigh impossible. In [220] effect, and in spite of the fact that one nation might occupy an immense area, yet it would be divided into small tribes who owned sway over relatively small territories and were (as their survivors still are) continually at war amongst themselves. It follows from this that there was no security, which is an indispensable condition for the raising of animals and for any other peaceful occupation. Even at the present time the Chaco Indians, although they are acquainted with our domestic animals and do on occasion try to raise them, do not do so on a worthwhile scale because the mere fact of their possessing them is a temptation for their neighbors to invade and despoil them. If social life had somehow got to the point of compelling these Indians to gather into large groupings, then, given the range of their vast territories and despite their being nomadic and continually at war, it would always have been easy for them to protect their animals, when invaded, by fencing them into inclosures.

Can the Indians of these parts have been cannibals? This is 266 a question which always arises when we have dealings with savages like these.

In America cannibalism has had adherents among "Hebrews and Samaritans," among "Barbarians and Christians." The savage Caribs and the cultured Mexicans topped off the very best dishes of their cuisine with human flesh. The peaceful Peruvians used not to disdain stews of human blood for their religious feast days, in which they would knead corn bread with the blood taken from the foreheads of babes -- what pious butchers were the gentle and beautiful women devotees of that nation's religion.

In this region of the Chaco, although cannibalism may have been practiced, temporibus illis, (which cannot be proved), at the present time it is either non-existent or else must be considered reduced to its very lowest terms.

I shall say nothing about the custom of drinking aloja from 727 264 the scalp of a prisoner which has been converted into a propitiating cup of vengeance and victory.

I have seen them drink avidly of the blood of cattle 262 272 slaughtered for our use, but they do not feed exclusively on cattle ●

blood or on that of other animals as some have reported; rather 262  
do they make their principal diet of fish, game, and the roots 272  
and fruits of the field with which, together with wild forest honey  
which is so abundant, they prepare the fermented beverages I  
have already spoken about.

He who spends any time among the Indians finds cause to 732  
marvel at the lack of cripples or maimed people. From this fact  
certain travelers have gone on to affirm that the Indians, like  
latter day Spartans, kill off their malformed babies. This is also  
the opinion of some historians.

[221] I, on the other hand, although confirming the fact  
of their being no cripples by my own personal observation, ex-  
plain the phenomenon by attributing it to the physical and social  
condition in which the Indians live. A more than free life, gen-  
erally sufficient food (in spite of what may be said to the con-  
trary); the nakedness of the women -- that is, their lack of tight  
garments about their waists and breasts; the healthful climate  
(for them at least), all are physical elements conducive to the  
great rarity of cases of deformity in the body structure of their  
babies.

Furthermore, the constant state of war, the frequent sur-  
prise attacks, the custom of giving no quarter, the wild beasts  
and reptiles, all conspire against the handicapped who are  
inferior in the indispensable faculties necessary in the struggle  
for existence. In addition to this it is probable that malformed  
children are not accorded the privilege granted their normal  
peers, that is, that their lives be spared by victorious enemies,  
and they be carried off to the latters' villages there to be raised  
as members of the kidnapers' group and thus contribute to its  
strength and progress.

All this then explains sufficiently the lack of deformed  
individuals without the need to attribute to the Indians the habit  
of killing newborn babies or allowing them to die. My personal  
experience allows me to set down a positive happening which  
gives the lie to such a supposition.

In the very center of the Chaco I came upon a deaf-mute  
Indian who must have been a little over thirty years of age.  
Really, if there is any defect which makes a man completely  
useless and deserving of being eliminated from society, this is  
it. However, it is true also that it is one of those imperfections